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The effects of independence, state formation and migration policies on Guyanese migration

Simona Vezzoli

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- analyse migration as part of broader global change
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Abstract

Using a historical approach, this paper examines the evolution of Guyanese migration from the 1950s until the 2010s. It explores the role of the Guyanese state in migration, the effect of independence and the establishment of a border regime on migration, with a particular focus on how political decisions and socio-economic policies have affected the timing, volume, composition and direction of migration in the post-independence period. After elaborating a new conceptual framework, the paper analyses the role of the Guyanese state across three broad historical phases: from the early 1950s to independence in 1966; from independence to the gradual political and economic opening of Guyana in 1985; and from 1986 to the present. The paper finds that the uncertainties generated by Britain's introduction of its Immigration Act in 1962 and Guyana's independence in 1966 led to two initial increases in emigration in the 1961-1962 and in 1965-66 periods. The Guyanese state's support of 'cooperative socialism' and its authoritarian stance until the mid-1980s then promoted large emigration, which gradually included all classes and ethnic groups. At the same time, British and North American migration policies cause the partial redirection of migration towards the US and Canada. The importance of family re-unification and skilled migration channels explain on one hand, how entire Guyanese families have emigrated, while on the other hand, how Guyana is one of the top ten countries for skilled migrants. This paper shows the importance of shifting beyond the 'receiving country' bias by considering the important role of origin country states in migration processes.

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1 Introduction

After a gradual process of decolonisation beginning in the early 1950s, British Guiana obtained independence in 1966 when it became the independent state of Guyana. The political, social and economic transformations triggered by independence significantly affected the living and working conditions in the newly independent country, and altered historical migration patterns to and from Guyana. No systematic empirical research has been conducted on how processes of decolonisation and independence shape migration, whether their effect is long-term, or how other developments during state formation influence migration patterns. This paper adopts a state perspective to examine the relation between the state and migration processes and seeks to answer the questions: How do states and their policies contribute to shaping the volume, timing, direction and composition of migration? And more specifically, how do the process of decolonisation and post-independence state formation affect migration patterns? This paper adopts a historical approach to present an analysis of processes of political and socio-economic change and examine how they may have affected migration patterns to and from Guyana from the 1950s until today.

Guyana has historically had a small population. With 560,000 inhabitants in 1960, its emigrant population was 6 percent of the total population, lower than many Caribbean countries. Migration has drastically increased since the mid-1970s, and today Guyana has one of the highest percentages of emigrant population in the world – an estimated 56 percent in 2010.¹ Guyana's staggering emigration figures suggest that independence may have ignited emigration, which was further stimulated by post-colonial ties and reinforced by the cumulative effects of migrant networks. A closer look at Guyanese migration trends reveal that the developments that unfolded within Guyana over the past sixty years in conjunction with migration policies in the major destination countries have greatly influenced migration patterns.

This paper aims to explain how political, social and economic changes have contributed to shifts in the volume, timing, destination and composition of Guyanese migration. The paper analyses the role of the state across three broad historical phases: from the early 1950s to independence in 1966; from independence to the gradual political and economic opening of Guyana under President Hoyte's government in 1985; and from 1986 to the present. For each phase, I examine the actions of the state, its ideology, and migration as well as other policies, to identify events or processes that have affected migration. Immigration policies of major destination countries are also part of this analysis.

The state is a central agent of development, able to create institutions and infrastructure that facilitate economic and social development and provide or inhibit individuals' opportunities, hence producing significant migration effects (Skeldon 1997). Its role seems even more relevant in the decolonisation and post-independence period, when the governments of newly independent states generally introduced ambitious development plans to set the country on a new course. States also often wish to control population movements in response to demographic, economic or social conditions. Thus, the state is taken as a point of departure to examine the conditions it creates on the ground, with the understanding that these conditions affect the sets of opportunities and challenges faced by individuals and influence their migration decisions. A state-centred approach may be problematic for

¹ Source: World Bank Global Bilateral Migration Database, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/global-bilateral-migration-database>; 2010 Estimates, <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:22803131~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html>, accessed on August 25, 2013.

two reasons: first the state is not a monolith but an ensemble of actors with specific and contradicting interests; and second, this approach inherently emphasises structural elements, ignoring individuals' agency. I attempt to diminish these shortcomings by consulting various government documents, speaking with various country experts and including qualitative interviews with individuals affected by migration.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a conceptual exploration of potential migration consequences of decolonisation and post-independence state formation processes and it defines independence, border regimes and post-colonial ties and their hypothesised migration effect. After a brief methodological description in section 3, I introduce British Guiana's historical migrations in section 4. Sections 5 to 7 present three broad historical periods, which capture political, economic and social transitions that underlie the major shifts in Guyanese migration patterns: from the 1950s to 1965; from independence in 1966 to 1985; and from 1986 to today. Finally, section 8 analyses the evolution of Guyanese migration timing, its volumes, direction and composition and concludes with insights of how the state and its policies shape migration patterns in direct and indirect ways.

2 Border regimes, post-colonial ties and migration substitution effects: A conceptual exploration

Starting in the 1960s, the literature on Caribbean migrations acknowledged that the transition from colony to independent country produced changes, with a particular focus on the introduction of immigration policies and their migration consequences. Empirical evidence shows that West Indian migration to Britain was altered by the introduction of the British Immigration Act of 1962 in conjunction with the opening of immigration policies in North America, but also identified an important shift in employment opportunities from Britain to North America (Marshall 1987; Nicholson 1985; Palmer 1974; Peach 1995). In his seminal work on West Indian migration to Britain, Peach (1968) stressed how the 1962 Immigration Act, which was the first official constraint to immigration for West Indians and other Commonwealth citizens, created a 'beat the ban' migration rush. He also emphasised that the employment opportunities in Britain had been important determinants, while origin country factors were merely 'enablers' and 'passive' factors in migration processes. Research in the 1960s and 1970s played a vital role in challenging the contemporary bias that linked immigration to Europe and North America solely on underdevelopment, high unemployment and population pressure in Caribbean countries, while ignoring the labour demand and migration policy factors in destination countries.

While valid, this shift may have obfuscated the migration effects of the structural changes triggered by the transition to independence. In fact, over the years, the opposite bias developed as research focused almost exclusively on destination country factors, including immigration policies (cf. de Haas 2011). Gradually researchers are rediscovering origin country factors, such as historical connections (e.g. colonialism, language and institutional similarities), geographical conditions (e.g. landlocked, proximity) and specific indicators such as investment in education and welfare services (Beine, Docquier and Schiff 2008; Bellemare 2010; Belot and Hatton 2010; Kim and Cohen 2010; Kureková 2011). Little conceptualisation has occurred however, not only of how a broad range of migration determinants (e.g. education, protection of private property, promotion of specific economic sectors and infrastructural development) are located in the origin country, but in fact that they are shaped by the origin state. Yet, origin states are hardly considered and they are perceived as powerless, even though in reality they are often concerned with population movement and engage with migration policies (cf. de Haas and Vezzoli 2011) as well as other policies that may indirectly shape migration.

When we take a broader perspective of the state, it becomes apparent that the role of the origin state in migration has been greatly underexplored.

This paper explores the role of the origin state in migration processes by examining Guyanese migration from the 1950s to the 2010s through Guyana's deep structural changes, starting with *decolonisation* leading to *independence* and the *formation of an independent state*. Two factors stand out during the transition to independence that may explain migration dynamics: the establishment of border regimes and post-colonial ties. Moreover, this transition involved changes to several state-led aspects that may affect migration (e.g. institutions, bureaucratic functions, education and taxation systems and migration policies). After presenting a conceptualisation of how the establishment of border regimes, independence and post-colonial ties may influence migration patterns, this paper explores how origin country state determinants may affect migration during the long-term processes of state formation. I rely on hypothetical models as hermeneutic tools to examine how development processes around independence may lead to variations of migration that go beyond its volume to encompass its composition, timing and direction.

2.1 Synchronic independence and border regime establishment

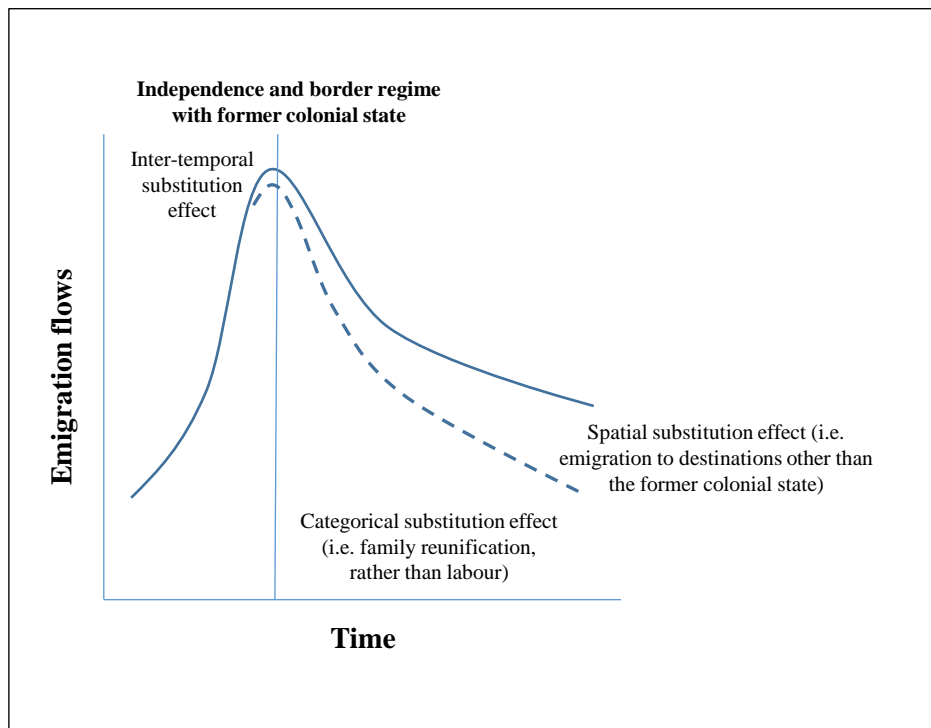
The process of decolonisation generally culminates with independence, a point of political breakage with the past that gives start to the formation of a new state. In fact, strong post-colonial relations may continue after independence with the former colonial state retaining great influence on the policies adopted by former colonies (e.g. Suriname)(de Bruijne 2001; Sedoc-Dahlberg 1990). It can also be argued that decolonisation may result in other forms of non-sovereign governance such as incorporation or departmentalisation (i.e. Puerto Rico and French Guiana). When decolonisation results in independence, two migration-relevant structural changes take place: the establishment of national borders, marking the official separation of previously continuous political units; and a new citizenship, removing freedom of movement rights previously guaranteed to 'colonial subjects'. These two changes lead to the establishment of a border regime, namely a set of regulations designed to control movement, which are implemented at the physical border and beyond (Langer 1999). A border regime generally results in immediate constraints to the population's freedom of movement and it may also produce unintended 'migration substitution effects', namely the effects of migration policy restrictions on the volume, timing, spatial orientation or composition of migration flows (de Haas 2011). Figure 1 visually represents the potential migration consequences of independence, displaying expected inter-temporal, categorical and spatial substitution effects.

In most circumstances, independence corresponds with a change in the set of opportunities and challenges faced by the population. On one hand, independence may be experienced as a moment of great opportunities, particularly for groups of citizens close to the power structure. On the other hand, the transfer of power from a familiar colonial government to a newly independent government may generate anxiety. In anticipation of the establishment of a border regime, residents may migrate pre-emptively, primarily to the former colonial state, causing a spike in emigration right before and around the year of independence (see Figure 1). This results in 'now or never' migration, also termed an inter-temporal substitution effect (cf de Haas 2011), as previously observed by Peach (1968) a year before the introduction of the 1962 UK Immigration Act.

The changes introduced by independence may however, influence more than migration volumes. Diverse reactions among the population may lead to various propensities towards migration along class, ethnic or political lines rather than a universal preference for emigration. Thus, the composition of the population leaving pre-emptively is expected to reflect more heavily the segments

of the population that are most uncertain about the country's future perspectives (e.g. groups without political and economic connections or the political opposition) or who may fear a loss from being prevented future entry into the former colonial state (e.g. job opportunities or family already at destination). Thus, independence and border closure are likely to transform the composition of migration flows.

Figure 1. The hypothesized effects of independence and the establishment of a border regime on international migration, with substitution effects



After independence, migration may taper off, particularly if socio-economic conditions are stable and feelings of uncertainty subside, although migration is likely to continue in the short-term into the post-independence period. The migration policies implemented by the former colonial state and other potential destinations may however, change the structure of migration and produce three additional unintended migration substitution effects: categorical, spatial and reverse migration (de Haas 2011). Categorical substitution occurs when migrants rely on diverse types of channels, legal or illegal, to emigrate. When entry channels are constrained, prospective migrants may explore family reunification, study, asylum and any other migration channels that may grant them access. For example, immigration to Britain over the 1965-1970 period showed that 72 to 86 percent of Commonwealth citizens were entering as dependents using family reunification channels,² although spouses generally worked once in Britain.

Post-colonial ties may also explain categorical substitution. Post-colonial ties have been loosely defined as a number of social, cultural, linguistic, educational connections and privileged relations between former colonial subjects and their former colonies, which make the former colonial state a preferred migration destination (Beine, Docquier and Özden 2009; Belot and Hatton 2010; Constant and Tien 2009; Fassmann and Munz 1992; Hooghe et al. 2008; Thielemann 2006). This notion assumes

² Immigration Bill: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Cabinet, CP(70)126, 31 December 1970, The National Archives, Catalogue Reference: CAB/129/154

that colonialism created a positive connection to the former colonial state and migrants universally prefer the former colonial state regardless of migration constraints or past experiences in the ‘mother country’ (Thomas-Hope 1980). High levels of restrictiveness of migration policies may however prompt migration to the former colonial state through other channels (e.g. asylum, irregular) or possibly to other destinations, leading to spatial substitution effects (de Haas 2011). By examining categorical and spatial substitution effects, we can move towards a deeper understanding of when and how colonial links shape international migration.

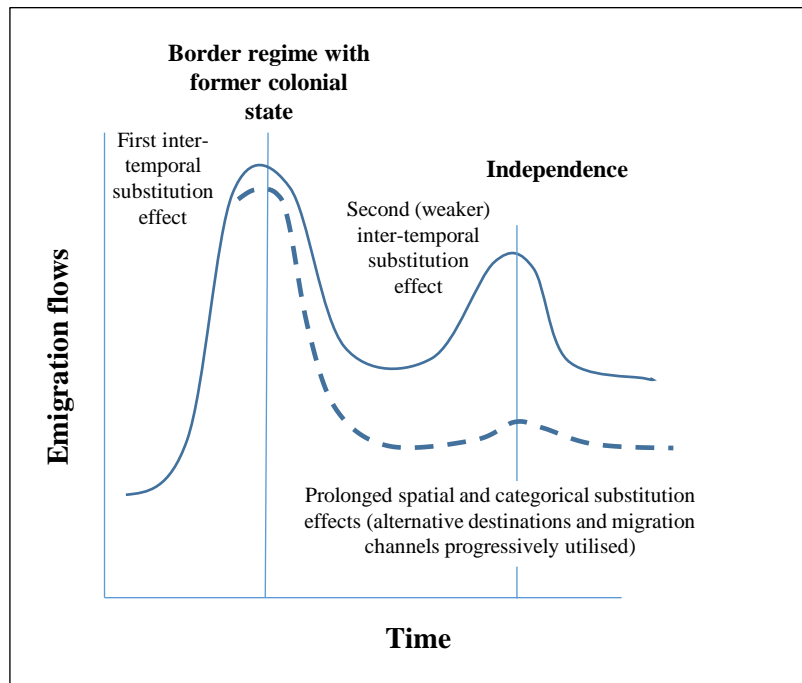
Hypothetically, emigration from newly independent states may experience an independence peak followed by sustained but gradually decreasing migration as conditions stabilise in the newly independent country and post-colonial ties gradually lose their importance, while migration to new destinations may gain relative strength. Moreover, the imposition of restrictive immigration policies in the former colonial state (e.g. limiting family reunification) may potentially cause step-wise migration, namely the pursuit of a regular permanent immigrant status in a third country. Although not represented in Figure 1, a fourth migration substitution effect may occur, namely the reduction of return flows as a result of the stringent rules for re-entry in destination countries. From an origin country perspective, this effect would potentially reduce the volume and alter the composition of return flows. Empirical evidence shows that return is negatively affected by a temporary or irregular status, as individuals with precarious visas may prefer to stay put even when return may be the preferred option because of the risk of being unable to re-enter (Massey 2005).

2.2 Asynchronous independence and border regime establishment

It is often assumed that independence corresponds with the establishment of a border regime, but in reality independence may occur before, at, or after the establishment of border regimes. Langer (1999) points to the fact that political borders may exist without border regimes (e.g. EU). Just as border regimes may exist without political borders. In the British Caribbean, only Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago obtained independence in 1962, within four months of the implementation of Britain’s Immigration Act. The British citizens residing in other former British Caribbean colonies that gained independence between 1966 and 1983 were unable to migrate to Britain in the years leading to independence. Figure 2 illustrates how the pre-emptive establishment of a border regime may affect migration outcomes. A third ideal-type model, applicable to the case of Suriname, presents the potential migration substitution effects when border control measures are introduced after political independence (Vezzoli 2014 forthcoming).

When border control anticipates independence, levels of uncertainty may be less acute at each instance. Pre-emptive migration may occur before border closure; however, political continuity may reduce the perceived risks associated with remaining in the colony and large parts of the population may wait and see. The inter-temporal substitution effects would not be expected to be as high as in Figure 1. However, the nearing of independence may prompt migration as a risk-reduction strategy. The ‘now or never’ effect may be more pronounced in case of high instability paired with available entry channels in the former colonial state, strong post-colonial ties or favourable migration policies in alternative destinations. On the other hand, the lack of migration opportunities to the former colonial state or alternative destinations, weak post-colonial ties, but also stability and positive future prospects in the new independent country may produce a less pronounced emigration peak. It is unclear whether the absolute volume of migration in Figures 1 and 2 would be the same, as the ‘wait and see’ attitude may not necessarily preclude emigration at a later time. Migration policy constraints may however hinder migration at later stages, reducing the total volume of migration in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The hypothesized international migration effects of the establishment of a border regime followed by independence



In the period between border closure and independence, diversified migration patterns may develop both in terms of the migration channels used (i.e. family channels and study rather than labour) towards the former colonial state and also the gradual reliance on alternative destinations. In contrast to Figure 1, by independence alternative destinations may be well-rooted, reducing the relevance of the former colonial state in long-term migration flows. Under these conditions, the effect of post-colonial ties may rapidly weaken.

The border regime-independence sequence may also alter the composition of migration flows. Since not all members of society would have had free access to migration before the introduction of migration restrictions due to low capabilities and connections to migrate, the flows may have been overrepresented by the elite and the middle class with access to resources, connected with the colonial government or pursuing higher education. Conversely, the second wave of emigrants may be composed of individuals fearful of the changes induced by independence, although only those with access to resources and useful connections may be able to migrate. Ultimately, independence and the establishment of a border regime and their timing provide vital insights of the dynamism of migration responses.

2.3 State formation and migration

State formation processes are crucial in determining long-term migration patterns. During the state formation phase, the independent state introduces a number of reforms and policies promoting a new national vision. Reforms may build on previous institutions and display continuity (e.g. economic structure) or alternatively introduce discontinuity (e.g. educational system reform). Broad reforms are expected to alter the opportunities available to the population at large or segments thereof. While the attractiveness of destination countries or the increasingly large communities in destination countries may strongly shape migration, the developments in the origin country may explain the rationale for migration, its surge at specific points in time (e.g. before and after independence), its volume and composition (e.g. politically- or ethnically-targeted groups) and its destination (e.g. post-colonial ties,

trade relations). This conceptual framework explores a combination of factors that emerged as influential drivers of Guyanese migration and shows how their relative importance in shaping migration has changed over time.

3 Methodology

This paper relies on scholarly articles, books and reports on the political and economic developments and migration from and to Guyana; historical documents issued by colonial and Guyanese governments reporting migration data and policy discussions; articles from 13 Guyanese newspapers between 1962 and 2013; and a limited number of historical articles from British newspapers.³ These sources were complemented with data from 30 interviews conducted in Guyana and Suriname between October 2013 and January 2014. The interviews explored individual migration trajectories, family migration, time and duration of migration, and return. The purpose of the interviews was to: learn about migration decision processes, including rationale, timing and destination; and investigate the relevance of structural changes, e.g. independence and political changes, on individuals' migration decision process. Among the interviewees, 8 individuals were still abroad, 9 had returned to Guyana, and 13 never migrated from Guyana, although they may have travelled abroad. In addition, one in-depth interview was conducted with a government official who has held various positions in government since the 1970s and provided valuable insights into government debates on migration.

The interviews do not aim to be representative of Guyanese society and do not pretend to represent the full spectrum of migration from Guyana, in terms of its timing or composition. Interviewees were however, selected to include a wide range of migration experiences at different points in time, and different ethnic groups and social classes. The characteristics of the interviewees are as follows: 19 men and 12 women; 12 Afro-Guyanese, 15 Indo-Guyanese and 4 individuals with a mixed background; 17 are originally from a rural area and 13 from urban areas, mainly Georgetown; the interviewees largely represented the low to medium class although the father of three interviewees had a government job; and the age of interviewees ranged between 23 and 75. Through a chronological analysis of the secondary literature, government documents and newspaper articles and the interviews I was able to identify the emerging conditions and migration-related factors relevant in each period.

This proved to be an effective triangulation method as the interviews often substantiated and provided insights on the dynamics that had been described in the primary and secondary literature. While interviews about past events suffer from *ex post* justification of past behaviour to fit socially-accepted models or 'standard motivations' (Menke 1983), interview techniques were adopted to ensure coherence of personal stories and consistency with time-specific historical events and living conditions. Thematic coding of the interviews allowed to emergence of insights on the fluctuating importance of migration and its driving forces in the past and today. Moreover, the interviews raised my awareness of migration as a life strategy which responded to changing living conditions in Guyana as interviewees described life adaptation strategies in critical moments (e.g. food shortages, heightened violence), migration strategies, complex histories of family migration and the diffusion of migration knowledge, in terms of migration policies, migration policy loopholes and the advantages and disadvantages of migration as a life experience.

³ Most articles from Guyanese newspapers are from the Guyana Chronicle and Stabroek News, while articles from the British press are mainly from The Guardian.

4 Setting the scene: British Guiana's historical migrations and ethnic diversity

Within the British Empire, British Guiana was historically considered a colony of relatively low economic and strategic importance, with sugarcane and rice as the main economic activities (Rabe 2005; Standing 1977). Labour shortages were recurrent in this scarcely populated colony. Initially British planters attempted to use local Amerindian populations for plantation work but these efforts were unsuccessful (Baksh 1978). Therefore colonial authorities procured plantation labour through slavery, but the abolition of slavery in 1834 generated labour demand. Initially, this was resolved through introducing a four-year period of apprenticeship, but once freed slaves saw that poor conditions and low wages persisted, they refused to continue working on the plantations (Baksh 1978).

Given the persistent labour demand, planters resorted to the recruitment of indentured labour from India, which resulted in 240,000 East Indians entering British Guiana in the period between 1838 and 1917, the year in which this system was abolished (Peach 1968). Indentured workers also came from the Madeira Islands and from Hong Kong, but the 25,000 Portuguese and Chinese indentured workers quickly left the harsh conditions of the plantations and entered retail trade (Baksh 1978). While East Indian workers had the right to return to India after their indenture contract, the majority remained in the rural areas of British Guiana to work on sugar plantations (Rabe 2005). Until 1928, British Guyanese planters continued to demand inexpensive labour and recruited workers in the Caribbean islands, which remained the last source of labour after 1917 (Baksh 1978; Marshall 1987).

In the meantime, many former slaves had pooled together their resources to buy abandoned sugar plantations and establish villages, where they could cultivate their own crops (Baksh 1978; Nicholson 1976). Plantation owners opposed any agricultural development that may compete with the plantation system and obstructed village productivity (Canterbury 2007). Over the years, the villages proved unsustainable. Internal migrations took place as some villagers returned to work on plantations, while many others migrated to mining centres or to the city, where they gradually found occupations in low-level civil service positions, including teaching, law and medicine (Nicholson 1976; Rabe 2005). Along with these internal migrations, freed slaves from other Caribbean islands came to work on newly opened sugar estates in Guyana (Segal 1987).

These early labour migrations produced a diverse population, with East Indian and African populations comprising the two largest ethnic groups, plus smaller groups of Chinese, Portuguese, people of mixed descent and the autochthonous Amerindian populations (Premdas 1999). Colonial practices produced deep divisions along ethnic group, rural-urban spaces and socio-economic levels. Over the years, the African population became increasingly concentrated in skilled occupations in the civil service, in the police and in the mining sector, while the Indian population remained largely rural and with little access to education. Before 1961 all schools were administered by the Christian clergy, which caused many Hindu and Muslim East Indians to turn away from education. The East Indian population suffered particularly from weak political representation, given their limited role outside of agriculture. However, rice farming proved to be a viable economic activity for this group, who was able to acquire small plots of land, develop a niche in rice farming and export, leading to the gradual improvement of the socio-economic conditions in the East Indian communities (Rabe 2005).

5 1953-1965: The long road to independence and the closure of the British border

5.1 Political transitions and the effects of the 1962 British Immigration Act

British Guiana's relatively stable political and social conditions in the 1950s suggested a speedy passage to self-governance, but matters changed rapidly after the first elections held with universal adult franchise in April 1953, which resulted in the victory of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham. In August, the British government revoked British Guiana's constitution, removed the PPP from power and brought in British paratroopers (cf. Hintzen and Premdas 1982) with the pretext that violence was raging in the colony and order needed to be restored. In reality, Britain intervened to prevent Jagan from implementing its alleged Communist agenda. A pervasive campaign against the PPP ensued with the covert participation of the US government (Rabe 2005), which relied on the dissemination of US anti-Communist literature for youth and adult readers to warn about the possibility that British Guiana would become another Cuba. This propaganda caused nervousness and frightened the merchant class, which began to leave the colony. These were often people of middle- and upper-class Catholic Portuguese and Chinese Guyanese who, being involved in commerce, feared the possible loss of their assets.

In 1957 Forbes Burnham founded the People's National Congress (PNC), which took some distance from Communist ideals and gained British and US support. The split of the PPP marked the beginning of racialized politics as the PNC appealed principally to the Afro-Guyanese population. Racial tensions that had been sown during colonialism were magnified in an ideological conflict. Evidence shows however, that in reality class divisions may have been as important as ethnic divisions, since the PNC was also supported by East Indian professionals, teachers and public servants (Jeffrey 1991). Ethnic violence in Georgetown, British Guiana's capital, broke out in 1962 triggered by a proposed government budget that would introduce duties on non-essential imports. In 1963, strikes and demonstrations erupted in violence, with perpetrators being primarily Afro-Guyanese and victims primarily Indo-Guyanese businesses and residences. By the end of 1964, there had been 368 political and racial clashes, 200 deaths and 800 injuries in a country of approximately 600,000 people (Rabe 2005). Strong evidence shows that violent episodes were manoeuvred by US CIA agents who aimed to destabilise Jagan and the PPP government (Hintzen and Premdas 1982).

At this time, Britain was becoming alarmed by the arrival of large numbers of British subjects from many of its colonies. In Britain, public perception and attitudes towards immigrants from British colonial territories deteriorated, exacerbated by long-term economic decline, high unemployment and housing shortages (Davison 1962; Freeman 1987). Initially the British government attempted to curtail immigration by appealing to Colonial governments to adopt measures that would discourage departures to Britain. In British Guiana, the Executive Council discussed these appeals in 1961 and refused to enact any migration-reduction measures, citing that 'the size of the problem (migration) did not justify establishment of the machinery proposed'.⁴

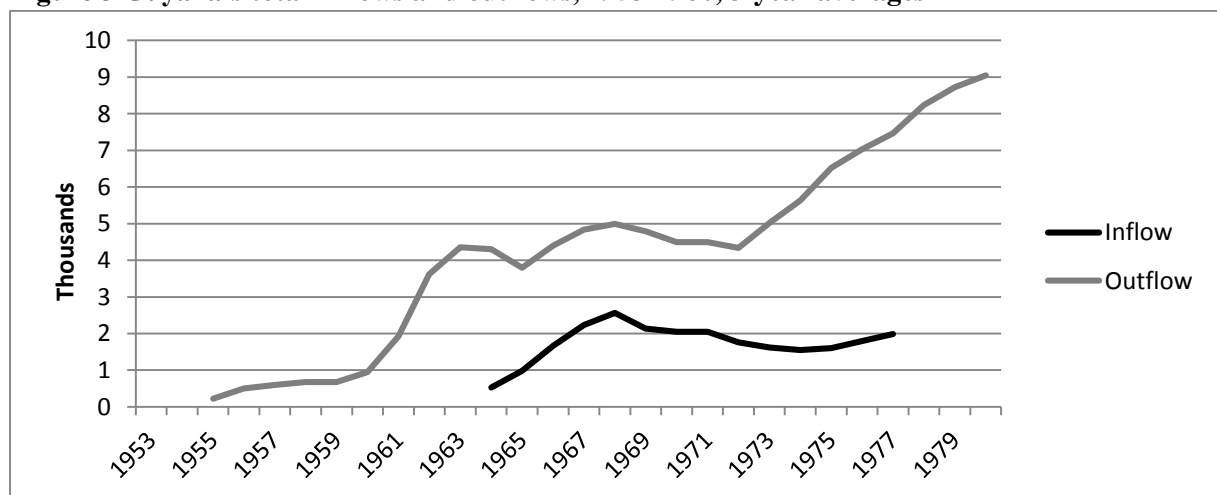
In fact, while migration from the British West Indies had reached important levels by the late 1950s, only a small number of British Guianese had migrated to Britain (Marshall 1987; Peach 1968). Early emigration to Britain was frequently linked to the pursuit of tertiary education, which would guarantee a good standard of living and a prestigious social status upon return. As tertiary education

⁴ Executive Council: Minutes and Papers, 18 November 1961, 311.

was not available in the colony until the foundation of the University of Guyana in 1963, it emerged as an important motive for migration among the interviewees who described Britain as a preferred destination in their own migration trajectory or that of siblings, aunts and uncles who studied or became nurses in Britain. Labour migration to Britain was less prevalent among Guianese as no organised recruitment system was ever coordinated by the British Guiana colonial government, unlike those established by London Transport, the National Health Service and British Rail in Barbados and Jamaica (Mayor of London and Transport for London 2006). The low levels of emigration from British Guiana in the 1950s may be explained by three factors: education was an important factor but the prerogative of a limited few; potential Guianese migrant workers faced higher costs and longer journeys to reach Britain than other West Indians; and British Guiana was enjoying a reasonably ‘healthy’ economy and good political and economic prospects lowering migration aspirations (Baksh 1978).⁵ Nonetheless, the importance of colonialism in determining migration destination at this time was noticeable: of the 34,000 individuals born in British Guiana residing abroad in 1960 (roughly 6 percent of British Guiana’s population), about 37 percent resided in Britain and more than 26 percent resided within regional British possessions.

In 1962 Britain introduced the Commonwealth Immigration Act, signalling the British government’s first step towards an increasingly hostile approach vis-à-vis the movement of its colonial British subjects (Byron and Condon 2008). British Guyanese noticed these changes: in November 1961 the Minister of Communications and Works stated that ‘the recent increase in emigration from British Guiana to the United Kingdom was due to the fear that legislation would be enacted in the United Kingdom prohibiting immigration; people wanted therefore to get in before such legislation was passed.’⁶ Migration data shows that emigration increased rapidly in 1961-1962 (Figure 3), coinciding with the 1962 UK Immigration Act. According to official documents, the implementation of the Act resulted in a drop in emigration in 1963 ‘to about half that level and was almost restricted to next of kin, students and skilled workers’.⁷ This suggests an inter-temporal substitution effect caused by an attempt to beat the immigration restrictions, with an immediate decline after policy implementation.

Figure 3 Guyana’s total inflows and outflows, 1953-1980, 3-year averages



Source: DEMIG TOTAL Database

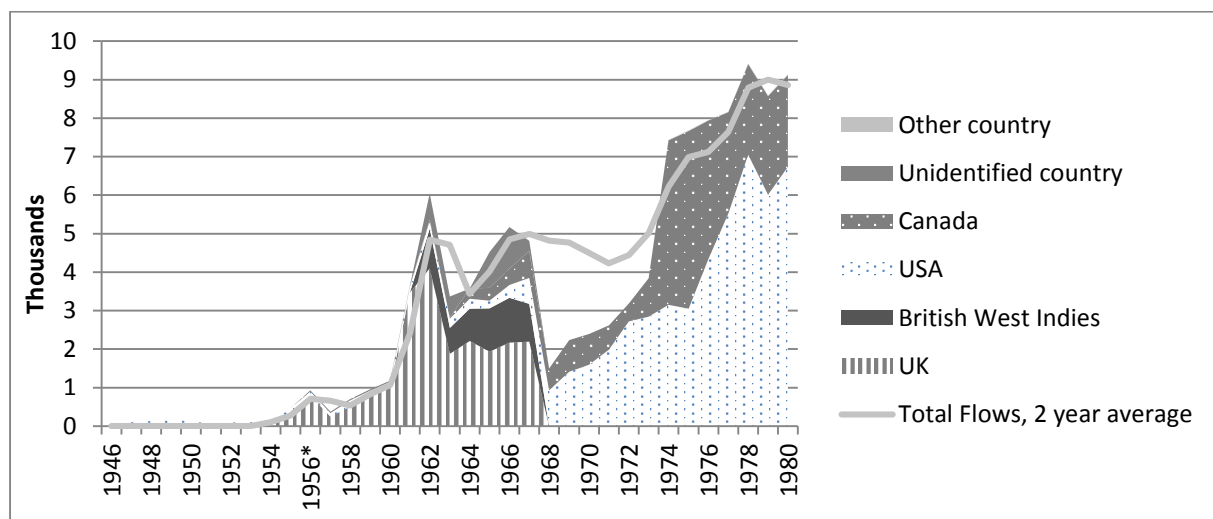
⁵ Although data quality is sketchy, documents of the colonial government confirm low emigration trends from British Guiana to the United Kingdom (Executive Council: Minutes and Papers, 18 November 1961, 311).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ 1963 Labour Report of British Guiana, page 41.

The halving of the flows to the UK in 1963 show that the Immigration Act contributed to the sudden growth of migration (Peach 1968). Moreover, while emigration out of British Guiana until 1961-62 was primarily oriented towards Britain, it gradually increased to other destinations as a reaction to UK immigration restrictions (Figure 4). But while the closure of the British border may have propelled emigration, we would be mistaken to think it was the only migration determinant. In fact, growing instabilities and ethnic threats in British Guiana may partially explain the increasing volume of emigration. In addition, in 1962-63 British employers demanded less labour due to an economic slowdown, resulting in lower migrants' arrivals, the return of men and the arrival of women and children, marking a switch in migration composition (Peach 1968). The Act, in conjunction with lower employment opportunities in Britain, may have contributed to the diversification of migration destinations to the British West Indies and other unidentified destinations, suggesting possible spatial substitution effects. For instance, Portuguese-Guyanese families were reported to have resettled permanently in Canada, where there was a cultural affinity (and also part of the British Commonwealth) and the opportunity to start a new life. As one interviewee eloquently stated, 'the longshot of it all was that it (the Act) somehow caused migrants to look for alternatives and they found them in the USA and Canada.' Figure 4 clearly shows the shift in migration destinations starting in 1963.

Figure 4 Total Outflows and Disaggregated Outflows from Guyana to a selected number of countries⁸



Source: Reported data from British Guiana Annual Reports on Labour 1950, 1955, 1956, 1963, 1965 and 1967; DEMIG TOTAL database; DEMIG C2C database; and Peach 1968.

5.2 The opening of North American migration policies

This geographical shift was reinforced by the fact that as Britain closed its borders, North American countries were opening new immigration channels: The US initiated small recruitment programmes, including with British Guiana in 1960, when '...the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing [...] received a letter from the B.W.I. Central Labour Organisation in Washington asking for a plane load of

⁸ These data must be used with great caution due to their incompleteness, particularly the fictitious drop in emigration from 1968 to 1973. Data for the United Kingdom are not available after 1967, while for Canada data are estimated from 1964 to 1973 from data for the Caribbean as an aggregate figure. The total flow data represent a more accurate representation of inflows and outflows, but cannot be disaggregated by country of future destination.

farm labourers for employment on US' farms.⁹ While this programme involved low numbers of temporary workers and contemporary accounts indicate that the absconding rates were low, it provided early labour migration connections to the US.¹⁰ ¹¹ US immigration policy was eased further in 1965 with the enactment of the US Immigration and Naturalization Act, which removed European-biased national origin criteria and allowed channels for new groups of immigrants, including citizens of new independent countries such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The Act also introduced non-immigrant temporary visas for skilled, high skilled and temporary workers needed in the US labour force, channels heavily utilised by Caribbean health care workers, particularly Jamaican nurses (Nicholson 1985).

As early as the mid-1950s Canadian immigration policies also created new opportunities, although most Caribbean people could only access Canada as domestic workers. In 1955, the Canadian government introduced a recruitment programme for a few hundred Caribbean women each year (James 2007). This scheme was active in British Guiana, where the colonial government provided the recruits with reimbursable funds for the cost of passages and incidental expenses, as well as training in home economics.¹² Between 1956 and 1964, only 30 domestic workers were recruited every year;¹³ however, domestic workers would be eligible for Canadian citizenship at the end of their one-year contract.¹⁴ Hence, these women had access and regularly used family reunification channels already in the mid-1950s (James 2007). The 1962 Immigration Act of Canada finally eliminated racial discrimination and emphasised education and skills in an attempt to counteract the inflows of family-sponsored unskilled immigrants. Although this Act is generally seen as the opening of Canadian immigration, the easing of restrictions was in fact true only for skilled individuals. Nonetheless, the notion of skills is time-dependent and the types of skilled workers sought in the Canadian economy in the 1960s were not highly educated, but rather professionals, teachers, technical and semi-skilled workers (Baksh 1978). Among the Guyanese population, clerical and white collar workers as well as teachers benefited the most from these policy changes. Interviewees stated that it was well known that there were jobs in Canada and since Guyanese did not require a visa to travel to Canada, they could easily go and 'explore' opportunities.

5.3 Independence and the weakening of migration to Britain

In 1964, the political situation in British Guiana was dominated by electoral victory of the coalition between the PNC, led by Burnham, and the United Front, led by D'Aguiar (Hintzen and Premdas 1982). The coalition government largely excluded East Indians from exercising power and engaged in coercive activities (i.e. strong presence of the police), worsening the country's racial tensions (Hintzen and Premdas 1982; Rabe 2005). Amidst concerns of escalating violence, British Guiana's independence talks resumed and independence was set for May 1966. This was surprising given the British government's principle to grant independence only under conditions of political and economic stability. Britain's realisation of its limited financial resources to administer the empire and the anti-colonial movement were however, strong motives to grant British Guiana its independence (Rabe 2005).

⁹ Meeting of the Executive Council of British Guiana, 29th September 1960. 'Recruitment of Farm Labour for the United States of America.'

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ An interviewee indicated that he met a Guyanese in Boston who was the son of one of these farm workers. He specified that a few of these farm workers settled in the Boston area in the 1960s.

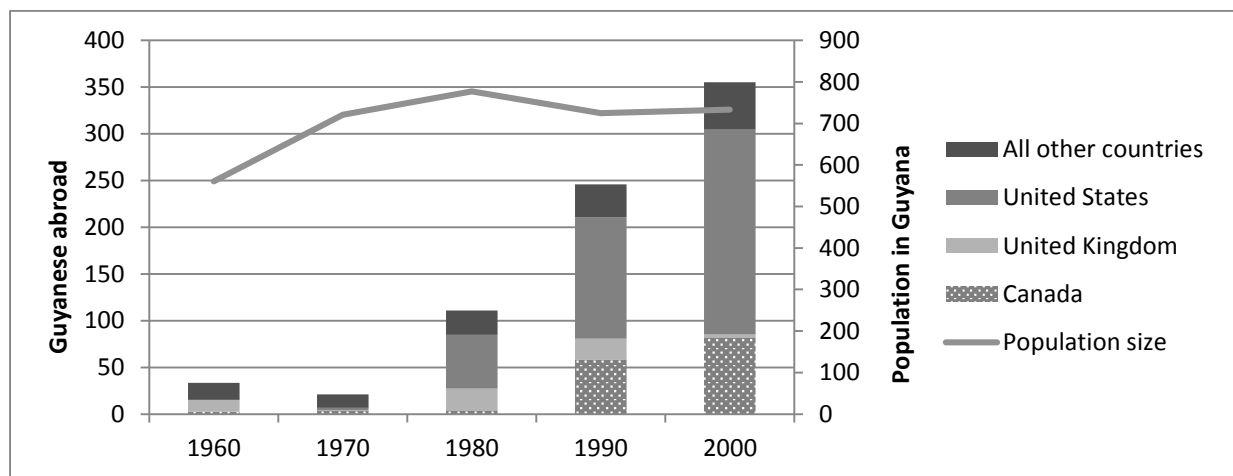
¹² Meeting of the Executive Council of British Guiana, 8th March 1960, L.56/147 IV. (10) 'Recruitment of Domestic Servants for Canada.'

¹³ British Guiana Labour Reports 1956, 1963, 1965 and 1967.

¹⁴ British Guiana Labour Report 1963:41.

The interviewees, regardless of their ethnic group, recalled that independence was widely welcomed by the population, who had demanded it. Yet, emigration increased in 1965-66, suggesting a second inter-temporal substitution effect created by independence. While emigration in 1962 affected 1 percent of the population, in 1966 it was slightly lower at less than .8 percent of the population, pointing to a slightly stronger impact of border closure than independence. Migration stock data confirms a drop in the size of the Guyanese community abroad in 1970, a decrease particularly visible for the population in Britain (Figure 5). Overall, migration flows to Britain scarcely changed in the 1963-1968 period, while emigration towards the British West Indies and other destinations, including Canada and the United States continued to grow, suggesting sustained spatial substitution. Hence, although independence stimulated emigration, in no way did it fuel an exodus.

Figure 5 Guyana-born individuals residing abroad, by country of residence and Guyana's population size, 1960-2000



Source: World Bank Global Bilateral Migration Database; UN Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, Total Population by major area, region and country, annually for 1950-2100.

By independence in 1966, a combination of reasons contributed to emigration. First, the initial growth of emigration in 1961-1962 was rooted in political reasons: The violent outbreaks starting in 1961 made living conditions in Guyana difficult, particularly for the Indo-Guyanese population, while the closure of immigration channels into Britain in 1962 gave a clear signal of expiring migration opportunities. This coincided with the opening of policies in North America, allowing for the initial diversion of migration flows. Second, the economy and employment conditions in Britain, while better than in Guyana, were not seen as attractive as the opportunities in North America. Third, among the Guyanese who had gone to Britain to pursue an education with the intention to return, some pursued work opportunities elsewhere. For some radically-minded intellectuals who may have held anti-colonial, non-capitalist or non-alignment ideals, which were common in Guyana at this time, job opportunities in developing countries may have been preferable to remaining in Britain. Fourth, the unwelcoming social atmosphere in Britain had shattered the notion of belonging to the British motherland instilled into the British subjects worldwide during colonialism. Fifth, some individuals, whose family had migrated from Guyana to Canada and the US while they were in Britain, engaged in step-wise migration from Britain to North America. Informants provided examples of how siblings in Britain joined family members in Canada as most of the family had started a new life there. Fairly rapidly, Britain lost its attractiveness as a migration destination. While some migration to Britain continued in smaller numbers in later years, it remained stunted in comparison to the growing migration trends within the Americas because of continually restrictive policies that severely curtailed even family

reunification (Segal 1998). Meanwhile, political uncertainties and insecurity in British Guiana were increasingly felt by the population, leading a growing number of the population to choose emigration.

6 1966–1985: ‘Co-operative socialism’, authoritarianism and emigration growth

6.1 The unintended migration stimuli of socio-economic reforms

After independence, the Guyanese government introduced a radical ideological reorientation that intended to uproot Guyana’s economy from its colonial structure, create a self-reliance decolonised society and redress the imbalances created during colonialism (Standing 1977). This process began in 1968, when Prime Minister Burnham began to pursue ‘co-operative socialism’, an ideology aimed at giving workers control of the economy. The government’s commitment to this agenda was solidified in 1970 when the country became a Co-operative Republic and began to promote co-operatives, implement price controls and a ban on imported foods, and in 1973 introduced a plan to feed, clothe and house the nation by 1976 (Canterbury 2007). Among the state-led development strategies that were implemented in the 1970s, four had long-term implications for Guyana, as well as seemingly unintended migration effects: nationalisation; the national agricultural plan; education; and the national service.

6.1.1 Nationalisation

Nationalisation emerged as an attractive ideological, financial and symbolic reference as a result of foreign-owned enterprises’ economic prominence and the public’s awareness of their role in leaking profits outside of Guyana (Rabe 2005; Standing 1977). The government’s implementation of nationalisation had severe effects on the nation’s financial and human capital, as the purchase of these companies at negotiated prices caused the national debt to treble between 1970 and 1975. By 1976 the state controlled 80 percent of the national economy (Thomas 1982), resulting in the nationalisation of most jobs. Although the government indicated that no enterprise established after independence would be nationalised (Thomas 1982), interviewees suggested that nationalisation was perceived as a threat to private property, a sufficient reason to convince some people to leave Guyana.

6.1.2 The national agricultural plan

The national plan to reform agriculture implemented in the 1970s focused on mechanisation and large-scale rice production to increase efficiency and competitiveness of Guyanese products on the global markets (Canterbury 2007). Mechanisation was found however, to have increased rural unemployment and underemployment (Standing and Sukdeo 1977) and rural-urban migration, represented largely by the Indo-Guyanese population. Internal migration posed a growing threat to the urban economic base, because of the already high urban unemployment levels in the early 1970s, and because rural migrants encroached into sectors largely occupied by the Afro-Guyanese population (Hanley 1981). To curtail rural-urban migration, the government promoted agricultural training and encouraged rural settlement, but the results were disappointing and migration to the city continued uninterrupted (Standing and Sukdeo 1977). Affected by a number of difficulties, by the 1980s the national agricultural plan proved to be unsustainable and, most critically, food self-sufficiency was not achieved as large-scale production had supplanted small-scale mixed farming (Canterbury 2007). In an indepth study of the village of Ithaca, Nicholson (1976) found that the rural population was negatively affected by poor agricultural growth and poor access to services and was aware of the wider employment opportunities and services in the urban area. Family and friends in urban areas would facilitate migration and often determined new migrants’ destinations as they linked specific rural areas to specific urban areas.

6.1.3 Education

The Guyanese government set out to provide educational facilities for the entire population as a means to lift the socio-economic status and move away from colonial educational policy, which created a privileged elite (Sackey 1977). By the 1970s, the government diversified secondary schooling away from the traditional grammar system towards technical secondary schools geared to teach the technical skills needed for the country's development. From 1975-76 university fees were abolished, students were financially compensated for following approved courses of study and were obliged to serve in the National Services after graduation. This resulted in a significant increase of enrolment and what Baksh (1978) called an 'education explosion'. This phenomenon seems to have been the result of greater access to education at a time when the population realised that education was the main avenue for occupational and social mobility (Baksh 1978). In particular, Indo-Guyanese parents recognised that village life would not allow their children to advance socially and economically and began to make big sacrifices to educate their children (Hanley 1981). Concurrently, mechanisation had freed up young men and women, who traditionally helped their fathers in rice production. An increasing number of children were sent to Georgetown with high chances that they would not return to the village after completing their education, as their life aspirations were linked to the urban environment and its more prestigious employment market (Hanley 1981). This stimulated further rural-urban migration (Nicholson 1976). Hanley (1981) also observed that villagers were acutely aware of how acquaintances had managed to succeed through education and had become doctors or lawyers in Barbados and in North America.

6.1.4 The National Service

Finally, the National Service was established as a prominent state-led development strategy, requiring a compulsory year of paramilitary service for all university students, which usually placed them on agricultural projects in the interior. This programme meant to instil a new value system in young Guyanese, deprogramming neo-colonial values and helping the youth solve Guyana's problems, in accordance with the government agenda. This initiative generated different responses: while for some it was an empowering experience, for others it was a deterrent to pursue tertiary education in Guyana. During the interviews, it emerged that parents of Indo-Guyanese female students generally resisted sending their daughters to the interior unsupervised. Moreover, the National Service was suspected to be a recruitment system of the future government-aligned elite. Thus, the programme contributed to the divisiveness of society (Baksh 1978) and, as confirmed during interviews, also pushed individuals to seek educational opportunities overseas to avoid the National Service.

Although these development strategies were meant to generate self-sufficiency and instil pride in Guyana, in reality they proved inadequate to diversify the economy, stimulate the private sector and create sufficient jobs to meet the new occupational aspirations of an increasingly educated population. The government attempted to resolve the unemployment problem by expanding the service sector, which in 1970 employed nearly 44 percent of all Guyanese workers, and increased jobs in teaching, the police, the army, and other public ventures such as the national insurance scheme and national banks (Baksh 1978). However, this strategy was ultimately unable to reduce job shortages.

6.2 Widening authoritarianism and population movement control

Troubling political developments made the Guyanese population nervous as the Burnham government gradually introduced policies that were at odds with democratic principles, creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity shortly after independence. In 1966 Prime Minister Burnham introduced the National Security Act, which gave the police arbitrary power to search, seize and arrest anybody at will (Mars

2001). In 1968, the end of the PNC coalition with the United Front, a party that represented business interests, caused greater political and economic uncertainty for middle- and upper-class Portuguese, other minority European groups, and rich Indian business people. For this segment of the population, emigration to Canada became increasingly attractive.¹⁵

A system of overseas proxy voting, corruption, grafting and political oppression led to rigged elections in 1968, 1973 and 1980 (Canterbury 2007; Jeffrey 1991; Rabe 2005). While in everyday life and the courts, the government suppressed human rights, restricted the freedom of movement and harassed political opponents. Attempts to stop the opposition culminated with the assassination of Walter Rodney, leader of the Working People's Alliance (WPA) in June 1980, while lawlessness reigned as scare tactics targeted critics regardless of ethnicity (Jeffrey 1991; Rabe 2005). The 1980 Constitution confirmed Guyana as a co-operative republic and introduced the figure of a powerful executive president (Polity IV 2010). In the five-year period between 1980 and 1985 politically supported gangs commonly called 'kick-down-the-door-gangs' would use ambushes to attack wealthy businessmen, usually Indo-Guyanese, creating a state of terror (Owen and Grigsby 2012).

By the early 1980s living conditions were grim. The population experienced direct discrimination, either because of ethnic group or political affiliation, people were 'watched' and grew alarmed by the increasing violence. An informant reported that people suffered from persecution, humiliation on the job or at departure, as Guyanese were pulled off the plane as they attempted to emigrate. This led to what many interviewees described as sudden emigration: people did not discuss emigration, not even with their immediate family, but had suddenly left with their spouse and children. From the government's perspective, people had 'voted with their feet' and, as one of the informants indicated, the government seemed pleased to purge government dissenters who may have otherwise voiced their opposition (Hirschman 1978). Emigration was also a financial concern for the government however, as many Guyanese emigrants possessed assets and their departure was 'draining wealth out of Guyana'. In this vein, the government introduced a law preventing people from exporting foreign currency, which then 'justified' stopping emigrants from leaving with even small amounts of cash.

6.3 Corruption, discrimination and the emigration of skilled workers

The emigration of skilled workers was not a new issue and it had been a publicly discussed subject since independence (Sackey 1977).¹⁶ In 1967 Prime Minister Burnham launched a remigration (return/immigration) policy, and by 1970 national and non-national professionals were selected and placed in posts including engineering, education, medicine, management, research and the social services (Strachan 1980; Strachan 1983). Few returned through this scheme, mainly individuals with high levels of commitment to Guyana's development: Guyanese returning from Britain representing 61 percent of total returns (Strachan 1983). These returns partially explain the decrease in Guyanese-born population in Britain in 1970 (Figure 5).

¹⁵ Unfortunately Canadian data for 1956-1973 is only available as an aggregate for the Caribbean region. However, in 1974, immigration figures were at 4277, higher than inflows to the US, 3153, demonstrating the high attractiveness of Canada in these early years.

¹⁶ The Guardian, May 26, 1966, p13, 'The Economics', by Clyde Sanger, available at ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Guardian and the Observer (1791-2003), accessed on 12 February 2013; Guyana Graphic, Tuesday January 4, 1972, page 1, "Move by Health Ministry to halt brain drain" available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana; Sunday Argosy, February 25, 1973, p15, "Too many young people leaving Guyana" by Humphrey Nelson, available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana; Sunday Argosy, August 12, 1973, "Brain drain: incurable cancer?", By R.O. Bostwick, available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

These returns paled in comparison to increasing emigration flows of skilled professionals and trained workers. Many skilled professionals who had run multinational companies left Guyana when nationalisation was introduced (Standing 1977). Working in the public sector was increasingly problematic as Guyana's bureaucracy became a centralised tool for advancing political interests. As the government engaged in a 'spoils system' that rewarded workers depending on their ethnic group and political position (Baksh 1978), civil servants who chose not to be a pawn in the authoritarian system opted for emigration (Hope 1977; Thomas 1982). In 1968 and 1970 respectively, 20 and 25 percent of high skilled emigrants were individuals who before departure held professional or technical positions such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, administrative posts and supervisors. Emigration of Indo-Guyanese was particularly noticeable, prompted by fear and insecurity generated by the increasingly uncertain political and economic future of Guyana (Sackey 1977). By the late 1970s the personnel situation in Guyana was so critical that there were hardly any qualified individuals able to lead or carry out the functions of the state, while poor recruitment policies and lack of proper manpower planning contributed to the frustration of those individuals who remained in Guyana (Hope 1977; Standing 1977; Standing and Sukdeo 1977). For most graduating students, a degree increasingly represented a ticket to occupational mobility abroad (Baksh 1978; Sackey 1977).

6.4 Continual transition to North American destinations

As Guyana became increasingly inhospitable, the Guyanese population looked more and more to build a future abroad. The progressive widening of British immigration control in 1968 meant that Guyanese could migrate to Britain only as holders of employment vouchers or as dependents. The 1971 Immigration Act came into force in 1973 and removed 'the automatic right of the Commonwealth worker to remain here (in Britain) once he has arrived'.¹⁷ However, 'immigrants who had been previously accepted for permanent residence in the United Kingdom were able to return [...] after an absence of up to 2 years and to bring in, or be joined by his wife, children under 18 and his elderly parents, free of conditions.'¹⁸ As the conditions worsened in Guyana in the early 1970s, Guyanese returnees from Britain may have used this channel to re-emigrate to Britain, possibly explaining the strengthening of the Guyanese community in Britain in 1980 (Figure 5).

The overall weakening of migration flows to Britain is however surprising since no travel visa was required until 1997 and Guyanese would have been able to overstay or seek asylum, strategies used to migrate to North America. Interviews offer possible explanations: first, the heightened levels of immigration controls in the UK may have made the Guyanese community hesitant to support further migration. A number of interviewees indicated that although they had family in Britain, these relatives never 'sent for them' even during the harshest times in Guyana, while another interviewee pointed to the general perception that Guyanese in Britain lost their ties to Guyana. Second, interviewees pointed to the unattractive employment conditions in Britain by the 1980s. Third, interviewees recalled harsh political and socio-cultural conditions well-captured by Enoch Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech, which advocated the immediate stop of immigration on the basis of Commonwealth immigrants' incompatibility with British society. Such political propaganda reinforced the negative experiences of West Indians living in Britain, making Britain a less desirable migration destination (Thomas-Hope 1980). Finally, the homogeneity of British society made Britain a place where it was difficult to 'blend

¹⁷ Immigration Bill: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Cabinet, CP(70)126, 31 December 1970, The National Archives, Catalogue Reference: CAB/129/154

¹⁸ This clause existed in the proposal of the Bill in December 1970, cannot be found on the 1970 Act, but is found in an extended form in the 1983 Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules, <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc8283/hc01/0169/0169.pdf>, and in today's policy in a more limited version.

in' and live as undocumented migrants, which deterred irregular immigration. While these factors alone may not have led to a migration decline, the availability of alternative destinations helped to cast Britain aside.

In North America, after the 1965 US immigration Act introduced skills criteria, the 1976 amendments to the Act restricted entry opportunities by requiring a job offer. Nevertheless, the amendments also allowed immigrants from the Americas with a temporary or even an irregular position who were already in the US to adjust their status (e.g. through marriage). Entry quotas were reduced further in 1980; yet in 1982, the US Ambassador to Guyana announced that its government would offer Guyana 11,000 permanent visas and 6,000 visitor visas, up from 6,600 and 5,000 respectively in 1981. In 1982, US policy also introduced a new refugee category.¹⁹ Guyanese increasingly applied for permanent residence as spouses and children of US permanent residents, but irregular migration also increased.²⁰ By this time, even rural Guyanese had become well-versed in regular migration regulations and how the regulations could be circumvented. For instance, during the Vietnam War, one could overstay and avoid deportation by volunteering for the US Army, a strategy reportedly used by Guyanese (Hanley 1981).

Canada's immigration policy followed a different path: While in 1967 Canada reinforced its emphasis on skills by introducing the point-system, by 1973 labour shortages pushed the government to introduce a temporary work visa programme. The 1976 Immigration Act embodied non-discrimination, family reunification and refugee policy as the policy's three pillars, but also continued to emphasise skills, clearly expressing the Canadian government's concerns with the composition of migration more than its volume. In the early 1980s Canada's policies became more selective by restricting temporary workers and introducing a labour market test for low-skilled immigrants,²¹ while migration for high skilled and entrepreneurs was facilitated. For the rest of the 1980s, Canadian migration policies attempted to regulate flows through frequent adjustment of immigration quotas, which were lowered in 1983 and 1984. By 1985-86 Guyanese had become the top Caribbean nationality of asylum seekers, mainly composed of Indo-Guyanese applicants. Canadian authorities approved 40 percent of asylum seeking applications, but many were considered economic refugees and were rejected. Remarkably, the applications decreased starting in 1985, when Guyanese were obliged to obtain a visa to travel to Canada.²²

6.5 The diversification of emigration

By the mid-1980s Guyana was on its knees (Rabe 2005). The promises of independence gradually gave way to dismal conditions which socially and politically included discrimination, oppression, victimisation, crime, violence as well as unemployment and food shortages that are very memorable among Guyanese. Emigration was staggering as 47,000 Guyanese (43% of natural population increase) migrated between 1970 and 1975 and 72,000 (70% of natural population increase) migrated between

¹⁹ Express Thursday June 17, 1982, p 15, '11,000 Guyanese get visas to live in the States', available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

²⁰ Guyana Chronicle, Wednesday, 16 June 1982, pp1 and 7, 'Harsh measures demanded against US immigrants...', available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

²¹ Data source: DEMIG POLICY database

²² Sunday Stabroek News. May 27, 2006 (missing year, 2006 assumed given the content) p3&9, 'Guyanese still applying in droves to Canada, but only 10% granted refugee status' by Miranda La Rose. Unfortunately Canadian refugee data (Refugees Landed in Canada – RLC) is only available after 1990.

1976 and 1981 (Thomas 1982).²³ This period marked the maturation of skilled emigration with the departure of all kinds of professionals who were discriminated against for not complying with political agendas. Increasingly skills were recognised not as a way to contribute to Guyana's development but to emigrate, leading more people to upgrade their skills to migrate (Thomas 1982).

Gradually great hardship affected the entire population, leading all social sectors to emigrate and increasingly concerning the lower classes (Canterbury 2007; Roopnarine 2013). North America was the chosen destination by many who perceived that jobs were available and salaries were high, although Guyanese frequently migrated through marriage or as family members of Canadian or US permanent residents or citizens. In 1982, Guyanese applied as relatives of US citizens (71 percent) or US residents (20 percent), compared to skilled or unskilled workers needed in the US (6 percent) (Maingot 1983). By the early to mid-1980s the family reunification processes had been fully 'activated' and entire families, including members beyond the nuclear family were 'sponsored' or 'sent for', as Guyanese colloquially refer to this process. This may partially explain why the introduction of a job offer requirement in the 1976 US policy had seemingly very little effect in constraining immigration from Guyana, as many individuals were able to 'jump category' and use family reunification channels.

This strategy was also used by family members who had previously migrated to Britain, leading to emigration flows of Guyanese from Britain to North America. Greater obstacles to obtain regular access to North America may have led to greater reliance on irregular migration channels. Interviewees indicated that it was a known fact that in North America, and in particular the US, one could 'disappear from the authorities' and lead a viable life without documents within the Guyanese community in New York City or Toronto. This process was facilitated by the Guyanese communities in North America, which were perceived as 'welcoming' and willing to help Guyanese immigrants.

Regional migration to Suriname, Brazil, Venezuela and a number of Caribbean countries also gained strength (Canterbury 2007). The total emigration estimates cited by Thomas (1982) when compared to immigration reported by main destination countries (DEMIG C2C database) suggest that about 15,000 Guyanese migrated within the region in 1970-75 and about 20,000 in 1976-1981. Better wages and working conditions in a number of Caribbean islands in conjunction with easy access attracted teachers, medical and university recruits. Rural Indo-Guyanese migrants first worked in the Surinamese sugar industry in the 1950s and in the late 1960s and 1970s they became an important part of the workforce in the sugar, rice and lumber sectors. A survey of these workers suggested that their migration was motivated by the poor living conditions in Guyana and the search of greater freedom. While scholars hypothesised that Guyanese were interested in step-wise migration, about 26 percent of Guyanese workers in the rice sector considered Suriname as a possible stepping stone to further migration, while 61 percent were interested in settling in Suriname (Menke 1983).

7 1986-2013: Persistent instability and the consolidation of migration patterns

7.1 Strenuous ethnic relations and a stammering economy

After Forbes Burnham's sudden death in 1985, Desmond Hoyte took leadership of the government and by 1987 he opened discussions on free and fair elections. The first democratic elections in 1992 resulted

²³ The sources of this data are Government of Guyana, IMF and World Bank and include all outflows, not only to main destination countries as the data originating from the DEMIG C2C database.

in the victory of Cheddi Jagan's PPP. Guyana seemed to be set on a new path, but years of corruption, clientelism and oppression had ruined national institutions (e.g. the police force and the education system). The population had also undergone deep changes: on one hand Guyanese had become demoralised and learnt to disregard the government as a coping mechanism; on the other hand, twenty years of intense emigration had led to the departure of the bulk of experienced qualified workers, professionals and academics along with the majority of new graduates, a vacuum filled by people who often lacked the necessary preparation to serve vital national functions. Guyana experienced a shortage of strategic human resources needed for national political, social and economic reconstruction.

The 1997 electoral victory of the PPP/C (formerly PPP) ushered in a period of heightened violence. PNC supporters contested the election results leading to sporadic violent clashes between political factions and political gangs which targeted and killed supporters of the opposition. The police used force, intimidation and extreme policing measures such as extra-judicial killings and eventually deployed the army to enforce the law (Owen and Grigsby 2012). Ahead of the 2001 elections, the government took many precautions, but a delay in announcing the results raised renewed suspicion in the legitimate re-election of the PPP, leading once again to political violence (Polity IV 2010).

In the new millennium, criminal gangs came to dominate public and political life. Between 2002 and 2006 a string of robberies, murders and kidnappings allegedly perpetrated by a group of Afro-Guyanese escaped convicts turned into a political issue when the PNC/R (formerly PNC) offered its open support in light of their claims of marginalisation by the PPP/C-led government. The government attempted to use the police to stop the violence, but unable to do so it latently supported 'phantom squads' that targeted, tortured and executed a number of Afro-Guyanese gang members. The phantom squads were allegedly headed by a leading international drug trafficker, Shaheed 'Roger' Khan, whose involvement in the phantom squads pointed to the government's awareness and collaboration with an international drug criminal to control the opposition (Owen and Grigsby 2012). For the past decade, drug trafficking has been a source of international concern particularly as estimates suggested that 20 percent of GDP in 2006 was earned through the trafficking in cocaine through the country (US Department of State 2006). Drug trafficking and the related escalation of violence may explain why in 2003 Guyanese were among Canada's top ten nationalities of asylum seekers, with 640 applications lodged, although only 17% were approved.²⁴

Both the high level of violence and the corruption of government and its institutions did nothing to increase the population's confidence in the future of Guyana and its political class. Certain of its ability to hold onto power, the PPP/C-led government lost any respect for the rule of law, engaged in corruption and established its own version of authoritarian rule (Canterbury 2007). If the PPP victory in 1992 sparked hope, by the turn of the millennium it was clear that Guyana had only experienced a shift in the ethnic group in power. Capturing a common feeling of hopelessness in the political system, an interviewee stated that by this time 'there could no longer be grounds for persuading people to stay.'

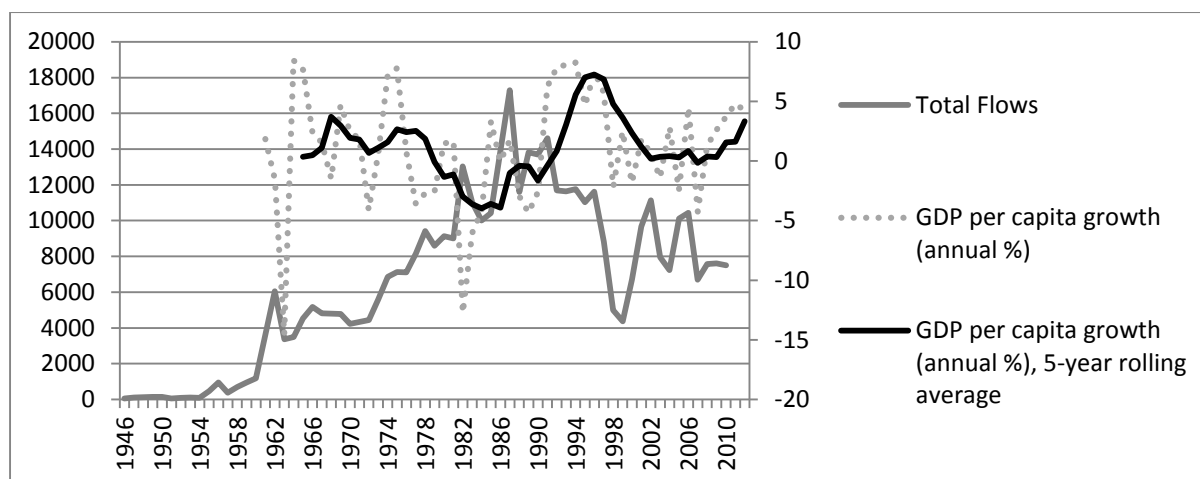
Simultaneously, Guyana's economic performance became weaker throughout the 1980s with rapidly deteriorating exports and falling GDP (Thomas 1982; Thomas 2013). Under Hoyte's leadership, the PNC government opened the economy towards market-based principles which brought the World Bank and the IMF to introduce structural adjustment programmes, including the privatisation of state-owned industries. Levels of human development increased from 0.52 in 1990 to 0.57 in 2000 and

²⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, IRB Refugee Status Determinations (1989-2011 Calendar Year), <http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/documents/REFUGEEESTATSCOMPREHENSIVE1999-2011.pdf>, accessed on June 1, 2014.

inequality decreased from 51.55 in 1993 to 44.54 in 1998. Yet, economic growth was largely concentrated in agriculture, while other parts of the economy were shrinking: the public sector declined by 45 percent, bauxite operations decreased about 37 percent, and the sugar industry experienced a decline of 35 percent (Canterbury 2007).

Surprisingly, after 2006 Guyana's economy grew, with GDP figures expanding, public indebtedness decreasing and progress of Guyana's rating from a highly-indebted poor country to low-middle income status (Economist Intelligency Unit 2013). Thomas (2013) warns however, that the GDP figures reported since 2006 (Figure 6) reflect a data measurement change which occurred when the Bureau of Statistics officially rebased the National Accounts series, replacing the previous 1988 series with the 2006 series. Consequently, GDP estimates were 62 to 77 percent larger than those obtained with the former base year, resulting in an impressive 7 percent growth rate for 2007. Similarly, the debt-to-GDP ratios were also lowered (cf. Thomas 2013). In fact, even when we consider human development levels, after an increase in 1990 they have remained at around 0.61-0.63 in 2005-2012, slowly driving Guyana below medium development levels and challenging the reported GDP growth.²⁵

Figure 6 Guyana's total emigration flows (1953-2010) and GDP per capita (1960-2010)



Sources: Migration flows - Reported data from: British Guiana Annual Reports on Labour 1950, 1955, 1956, 1963, 1965 and 1967; DEMIG Total Migration Flows Database; DEMIG C2C Migration Flow Database; and Peach 1968; GDP per capita – World Development Indicators (WDI), The World Bank, 6 May 2014.

7.2 The selectivity of North American migration policies

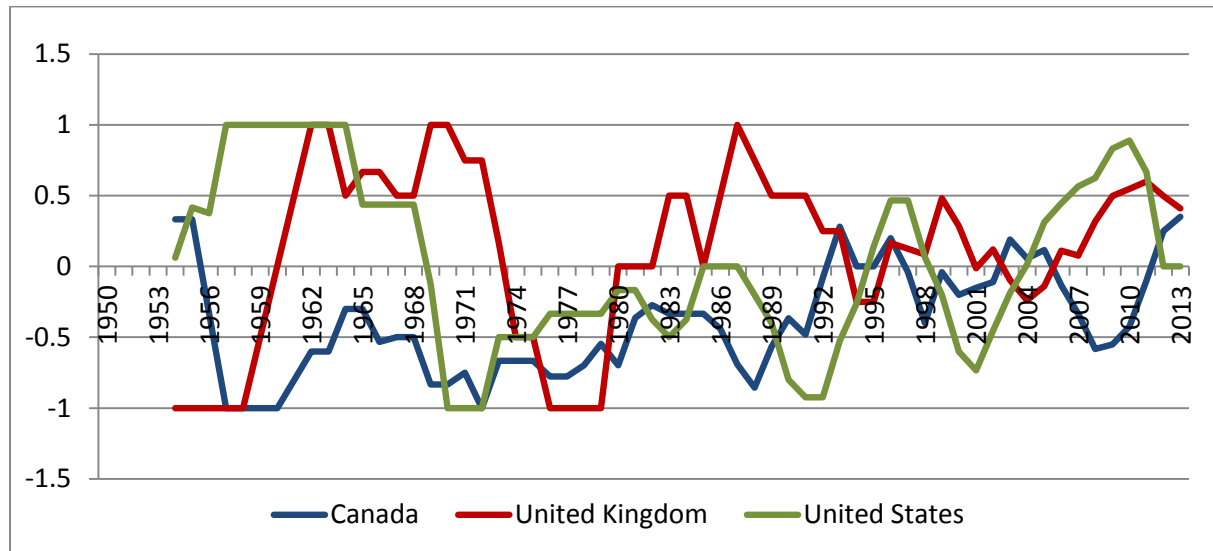
Destination countries' migration policies also underwent multiple changes over the 1985-2013 period: Canadian immigration policy wavered in its level of restrictiveness (Figure 7) generally targeting irregular entries, although all migrant categories, including investors and skilled migrants, were restricted at times. For Guyanese citizens, movement to Canada was significantly restricted starting in 1985, when Canada introduced a travel visa.²⁶ This went along with a general increase in border controls and fines for the transport and smuggling of undocumented migrants. Even for family migration, Canada introduced more rigid rules to reduce fraudulent applications from 1993. In 2000 however, a series of regulations made common-law partners eligible for family sponsorship and parents and grandparents enjoyed a Super Visa from 2011. Family channels were made once again more restrictive

²⁵ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Index (HDI), available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>, accessed on May 18, 2014.

²⁶ Data source: DEMIG VISA database.

in 2012 when time limits were set to limit sponsorship of subsequent spouses. Although since 1993 higher qualifications were required of skilled workers and new procedures limited quotas for specific immigrant classes, Canada was generally favourable to skilled immigration in the 1994-2008 period, although starting in 2010 quotas were again reduced and new requirements, such as language abilities and adaptability, introduced.²⁷

Figure 7 Overall changes in restrictiveness in migration policy in Canada, United Kingdom and United States, 1953-2013, 5-year average



Source: DEMIG POLICY

In the US, immigration policies in the 1986-1994 period became less restrictive, generally facilitating the entry of professionals and health care workers and protecting family member categories. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) acted as a regularisation, impacting inflows from 1989 to 1998, although its effect on Guyanese immigration do not seem substantial (Figure 8). Starting in 1996 however, new policy measures increased restrictions: The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 effectively allowed border officers to 'accept or reject' asylum claimants at the border and expedited the backlog of asylum applications. This may have affected the rejections of Guyanese asylum applications, as Guyanese no longer had a legitimate case for political asylum after the restoration of democracy in 1992.²⁸ The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) also introduced bans for irregular immigrants who were deported or were leaving the country voluntarily. Overstaying could lead to a 10-year entry ban, while re-entering irregularly would earn an irregular migrant an indefinite ban.²⁹ The same Act also increased the minimum income requirements for family sponsorship and strengthened its enforcement. Many US-based Guyanese were thought to be unable to meet this threshold.³⁰ By 1999 the new forms and complex process created large backlogs,³¹ and up to 90 percent of Guyanese immigrant visa applications were

²⁷ Data source: DEMIG POLICY database

²⁸ Guyana Chronicle, Sunday, June 22, 1997, p3, "Guyanese asylum seekers to be deported from U.S." by Vishnu Bisram in New York, available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

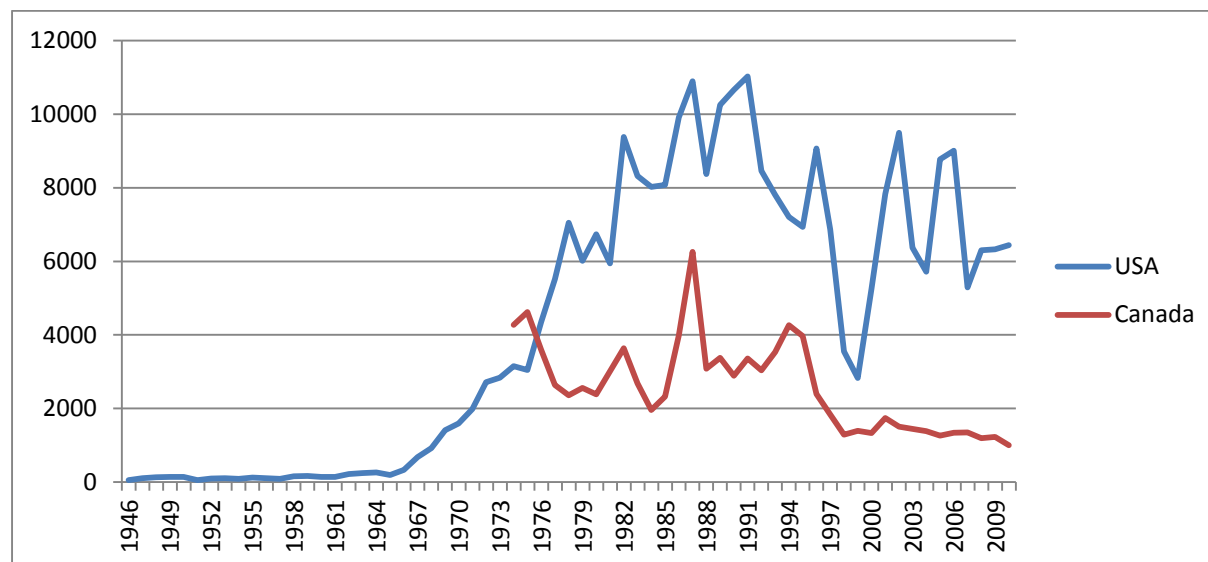
²⁹ Guyana Chronicle, Tuesday, April 8, 1997, p1, "Guyana monitors new U.S. immigration law", available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

³⁰ Guyana Chronicle, Monday, April 28, 1997, p11, "New immigration law impact: Tougher for Guyanese to join relatives in U.S." by Vishnu Bisram in New York, available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

³¹ Sunday's Chronicle, June 14th, 1998, "Guyanese affected by new delays for Green Cards" by Vishnu Bisram available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

turned down,³² while before 1996, 90 percent of Guyanese immigrant visa applications were approved.³³ These policy requirements and logistical difficulties seem to have led to a stunning immigration drop in 1997-98 (Figure 8). Since 2001, US policies continued to move towards more restrictiveness, targeting border controls and surveillance measures, expanding grounds for deportations and limiting entry of workers and refugee rights.³⁴

Figure 8 Total inflows from Guyana to Canada and the United States (1946-2010)



Source: DEMIG C2C database

7.3 Long-term emigration effects of national constraints and migration policies

The ups and downs of political and economic developments created an unstable environment throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. This led to the consolidation of emigration patterns that started to take shape in the 1970s and 1980s. For people with relatives abroad, reliance on family reunification dominated. Stories of the emigration of family members abounded as a well-established sponsorship process created the gradual emigration of entire families: adult children sponsored their parents and siblings, while siblings themselves began to sponsor other family members upon meeting eligibility requirements, and so on. During this period the emigration of entire families was ‘completed’ as parents, numerous adult children, and respective spouses relocated to Canada or the US in cycles that took up to 11-12 years.³⁵ Among the interviewees, some individuals waited up to 15 years for their permanent visa, a process that created unusual dilemmas. While waiting for US permanent residence permit, some individuals started life projects in Guyana which brought them satisfaction; however, once they finally received the permit, their life was put into question. Although their desire to emigrate had weakened, they felt a certain ‘pressure’ to start a new life in the US, as giving up the opportunity to migrate to the US regularly was a rather unpopular choice, particularly when so many Guyanese would still go to great lengths to have that right.

³² This was recognised as a global problem as the rate of refusal went up from about 15 percent to 90 percent on average.

³³ Stabroek News, Friday April 16, 1999, p3, “US immigrant visa refusals over 90%: Affidavit of Support posing major problems” by Courtney Jones, available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

³⁴ Source: DEMIG POLICY.

³⁵ Guyana Chronicle, Sunday, December 6th, 1998, p13, “U.S. releases visa availability for Guyana” by Vishnu Bisram, available at Guyana National Library, Georgetown, Guyana.

Heavy family migration also produced another dilemma since at times only one or two family members were left in Guyana. These individuals expressed a feeling of pressure as the family abroad encouraged them to migrate, yet they referred to ‘not wanting to go’. Some people eventually gave in, while others resisted the pressure to ‘be sent for’ or to ‘overstay’ during each visit to Canada or the US. Among these individuals were grandparents needed by their adult children in the US for minding the grandchildren. These grandparents often engaged in ‘partial’ or ‘pendulum’ migration and they returned to Guyana in wintertime. The trend of older women migrating to support their children and grandchildren was also observed by Karran (2007) among Indo-Guyanese women in Great Britain.

For people without access to regular migration channels, emigration often involved entering with a tourist visa and overstaying, obtaining fraudulent documents, or using smuggling services. In the late 1980s, individuals, sometimes middle-aged and with relatively good jobs, chose to migrate to the US with their entire family by overstaying a tourist visa, aware of the risks but also of the possibility to go undetected and find job opportunities in the Guyanese community. Irregular migration was a common topic in the Guyanese press from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s, with reports of yearly deportations from Canada and the US, the reasons for their deportation including overstaying and summary descriptions of how the irregular status came about. Throughout this period, Canadian and US diplomats in Guyana gave public meetings to inform them of new policy rules introduced by their respective governments and long articles were published on national newspapers to announce changes in visa procedures, fee changes, and visa processing times, often warning individuals that no exception to the queuing systems would be made under any circumstances. The ensemble of migration news reported in the Guyanese press raised awareness of the available migration channels and the consequences of irregular migration, supplementing the information from relatives abroad.

From the late 1990s, migration to Canada has been decreasing in contrast to stronger emigration to the US (Figure 8). This may be due to the public perception that Canada’s policies have become more restrictive; interestingly, this perception seems to be confirmed by the long-term trends of Canadian migration policies shown in Figure 7. Canadian authorities also announced in 2008 that candidate skilled workers would have to wait 3-4 years for their permit, a 50 percent increase over previous processing times.³⁶ While this may have led to a spatial substitution towards other destinations, the composition of flows may also provide a possible explanation as Canada has been the destination strongly preferred by East Indians and 80 percent of Canadians of Guyanese origin are East Indian (James 2007). Hence, the gradual reduction of migration to Canada may indicate lower emigration of Indo-Guyanese population. Although Indo-Guyanese emigration to Canada has continued to access opportunities for their children and family in Canada, and in some cases to seek asylum, but it still needs to be investigated whether this pattern may in fact reflect a diminished fear of discrimination related to the fact that an Indo-Guyanese government has been continually in power since 1992.

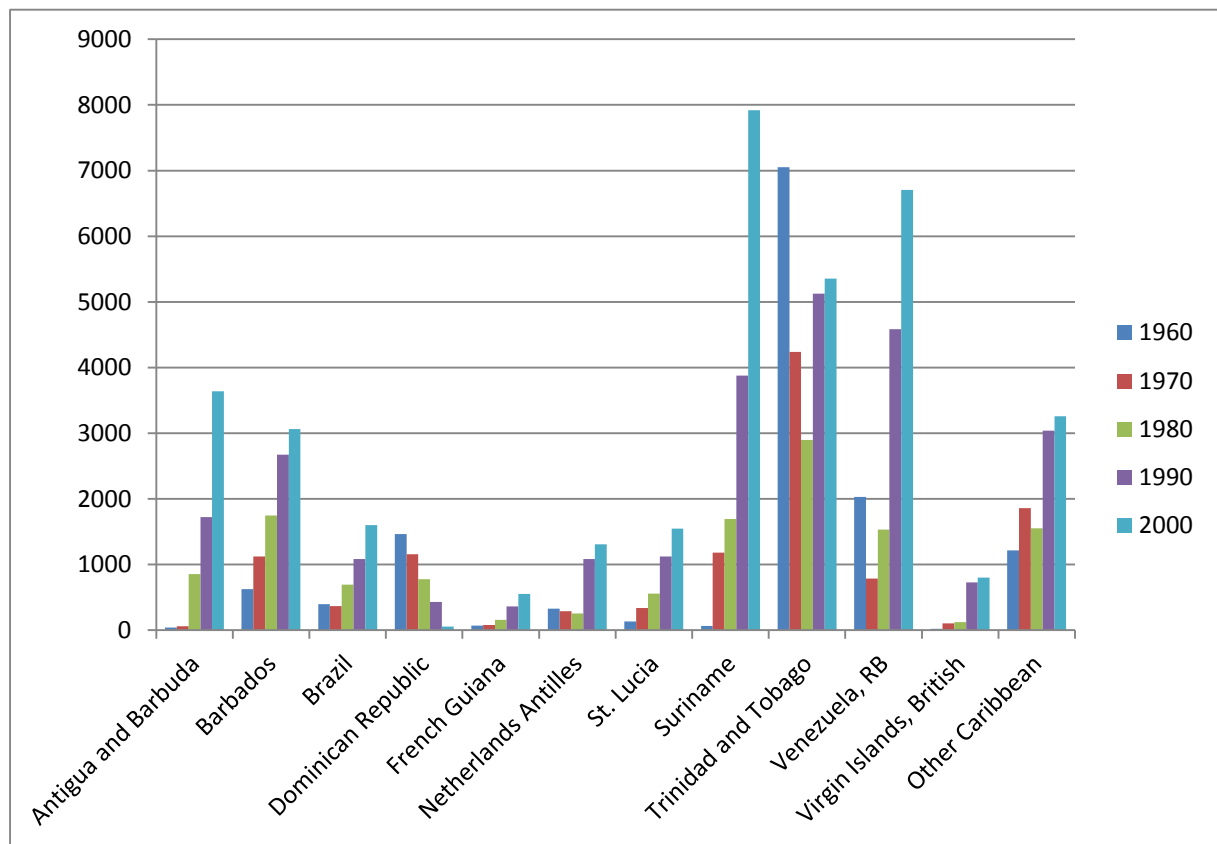
Concurrently, regional migration of Guyanese has continued to grow (Figure 9). Neighbouring Suriname is the easiest and cheapest destination, particularly for Guyanese living in the eastern regions of Guyana. These flows are facilitated by a porous and loosely patrolled border. In 1992 Suriname introduced strict immigration regulations that pushed employers to regularise the immigration status of foreign workers.³⁷ The doubling of Guyanese-born residents in Suriname from 1990 to 2000 may reflect

³⁶ Stabroek News on Feb 26, 2008, “Fewer Guyanese will be admitted to Canada under the Skilled Workers category”, accessed on 11 August, 2013.

³⁷ Guyana Chronicle, Wednesday, July 8, 1992, pp6 & 8, “Guyanese in Suriname: An Analysis by Daniel da Costa”, available at the Guyana National Library.

this regularisation process. A similar function is played by Venezuela for Guyanese living in the western regions of Guyana, while for Guyanese leaving in the south-western areas of the interior, Brazil has been the destination of choice. Given the limited infrastructure, for many of these individuals, reaching Boa Vista in Brazil is easier and cheaper than looking for economic opportunities in Georgetown. Further destinations gained popularity over the 1990s, including Antigua, Barbados and the UK Virgin Islands, where higher wages and the tourist industry attracted Guyanese to work in hospitality and the service sectors (e.g. security, gas station attendants). French Guiana has also recorded an increase of Guyanese residents from 1650 in 1990 to 2400 Guyanese in 1999 (Granger 2007), figures that are much higher than those reported by the World Bank (Figure 9).

Figure 9 Guyana-born individuals residing in the Caribbean region, by country of residence, 1960-2000



Source: World Bank Global Bilateral Migration Database

The growth in regional migration may partially be a spatial substitution effect of Canadian and US policies that have become more restrictive since the 1990s. Regional migration however, has a long history and has been pursued by individuals with skills such as teachers, as well as those with lower education levels, limited financial resources and perhaps no family overseas, who look for earning opportunities within reach. Even within the region however, migration is often irregular, as in spite of promises of freedom of movement within the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), privileges have largely remained for individuals with degrees or specific professions. As a result, migrants may work without permits (i.e. Suriname, Venezuela and Brazil) or overstay tourist visas (e.g. Barbados and Trinidad). Over the years, deportations of Guyanese for irregular migration activities (e.g. entry, false documents and smuggling) were reported from the entire Caribbean region and Guyanese have earned a negative reputation, leading to frequent discrimination experienced by Guyanese travellers in the region throughout the past two decades.

8 Insights on the relevance of the state and its policies on international migration

After reviewing sixty years of Guyanese history, we can propose a few insights on how independence, the establishment of a border regime and consequently state-promoted political and development strategies have greatly affected the migration patterns we observe today in Guyana. Pre-1961 emigration was relatively small, largely directed towards Britain, and followed two paths: migration in pursuit of further education, largely with the intent to return; and small numbers of labour migrants. The introduction of the border regime and migration restrictions between Britain and its colonies in 1962 promoted a ‘beat the ban’ migration among West Indian migrants including the Guyanese. This was followed by a second emigration peak in 1965-1966, which already showed some diversification of migration towards North America, where new immigration policies gave increasingly easy access to diverse populations. This confirms previous observations that West Indian migration largely reacted to changes in British and North American migration policies as well as to the growing employment opportunities in Canada and the US (Freeman 1987; Marshall 1987; Palmer 1974; Peach 1968). Guyanese migration also offers a clear example of a case in which post-colonial ties exert a relatively small influence on migration. The small size of the Guyanese community in Britain before 1962 may not have allowed the build-up of sufficiently large communities and concomitant strong network ties that would have been able to counteract the increasingly restrictive migration policies. In addition, Guyanese, like other West Indian immigrants, may have been negatively affected by British discriminatory attitudes towards its former colonial ‘subjects’, which may have also contributed to divert the attention of potential migrants elsewhere.

While significant, the effects of independence and the closure of the British border may have had a short-lived impact on Guyanese migration if political and economic stability had set in. Barbados for example experienced a similar peak in 1960-1962 and then another smaller peak in 1967, after its 1966 independence, but migration in the 1970s was gradual and about half the size of its 1962 migration peak. In Guyana, however, living conditions deteriorated as the government managed a politicised and authoritarian system and failed to diversify the economy and provide job opportunities for an increasingly educated population. These were the formative years of Guyanese migration, during which the role of the state and origin country determinants were of utmost importance in the population’s decisions to migrate. The migration policies of destination countries however, also greatly influenced the direction and the composition of Guyanese migration. For skilled individuals, increasingly open migration channels to North America made emigration fairly hassle-free. For others, gradual access to family reunification channels in Canada and the US provided a medium- to long-term migration route.

In the 1980s and 1990s, as conditions in Guyana remained unstable with short periods of growth and political gains followed by economic downturns, political violence and crime on the streets, a wide variety of migration channels were used. Intra-regional migration (mainly to Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Brazil, Barbados, and Antigua) gained more importance for those without the capability to migrate ‘overseas’. Skilled migration and irregular channels were both important, but migration through family channels became dominant. This has led entire families to migrate within the time span of 10-15 years, leading some Guyanese to feel pressured by the family to emigrate. Moreover, the protracted process of family reunification partially explains continued emigration, also after democracy was reinstated in 1992. This cycle of family reunifications may also have resulted in a very strong awareness of family connections between Guyanese in Guyana and those overseas as these connections are renewed continually. The ties between these individuals are forcefully bound for a number of years throughout the reunification process and beyond, as the US immigration policies hold

the sponsor responsible for the physical and financial welfare of the grantee for a number of years after residence has been granted.

After an emigration peak in 1987, total outflow figures showed a gradual decrease after 1992, although emigration remained comparatively high with an average emigration of about 9,500 per year in the 1992-1999 period, equal to 1.3 percent of the population. This raises two, apparently contradictory, questions. First, why is Guyanese migration still comparatively high? GDP per capita is among the lowest in Latin America and the Human Development Index showed that in 2012 Guyana was falling below the medium level. Decaying institutions include a university that no longer offers a quality of education and sufficient programme diversity to retain graduating students. Corruption, difficult access to credit and clientelism make it difficult for businesses to operate, while the population struggles to earn sufficient wages to meet basic living costs. We may also suggest that it is in fact the long-term drawn-out effects of family sponsorship which extend migration flows over the years.

But then, why has Guyanese migration been decreasing over the last two decades? This paradox may be explained by the increasingly restrictive immigration policies of major destination countries that target family reunification and the low- to medium-skilled, categories that are significantly important for Guyanese. Perhaps Guyanese migration has switched towards irregular migration, hence unobservable in the official figures, or alternatively, spatial diversification has occurred to regional destinations even for skilled individuals, which we do not capture with OECD immigration data.

An explanation to consider is that the reality in Guyana may be perceived by some as relatively better than it was. In spite of the hardship and the fact that many people who cannot migrate would do so if given a chance, there are also positive reflections about changing opportunities in Guyana. Some young interviewees said they did not want to emigrate, but they lamented that in Guyana you need to be self-employed to ensure a good quality of life. They would consider working outside of Guyana for a short time to save money and return to invest in small business ventures. While this may be interpreted as a rationalisation provided by individuals who are unable to migrate, in fact some individuals had connections that would have allowed them to migrate, but they chose not to. Thus, I would argue that perceptions of migration may be gradually shifting away from a pattern of migration that has prevailed since the late 1960s of leaving Guyana with no intention to return.

Increasing immigration to Guyana may also be contributing to changes in attitude towards emigration. The immigration of Brazilians and Chinese, who occupy specific economic niches by investing and introducing technological innovations, seems to have raised awareness of economic opportunities in Guyana. Yet, emigration may remain a necessary step for many Guyanese to access financial resources unavailable to them in Guyana, which is where we bring our attention back to the role of the state and its importance in shaping emigration. By creating conditions that meet the expectations of its population, the Guyanese state may in fact be able to still influence emigration patterns even today, after emigration has reached significant volumes, has touched all segments of the population, and seems to be largely driven by immigration policies. After all, we are all aware of strong past emigration flows that rapidly dried up, not because migration policies changed or because lack of emigration opportunities arose, but because of a change in the political and socio-economic conditions in the origin country. Hence, the case of Guyana urges us to be aware of the crucial role of origin country states in shaping migration processes.

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